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Khrushchev, Nikita

Soc. & Pol. Khrushchev Reminiscences

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The Editors of LIFE announce

the first publication of a unique historical document

KHRUSHCHEV REMEMBERS

No Russian leader—until now—has addressed history with intimate and personal reminiscences spanning his life and that of the Soviet Union itself. Next week LIFE begins publishing, in four installments, the reminiscences of Nikita Khrushchev, that many-faceted man who climbed from a peasant boyhood all the way up the Communist Party ladder to sit as an equal with the world's heads of state. In 1953, when he first gained the Party Secretaryship, he became the most important figure in the Soviet Union; from 1957 until 1964, as both Party Secretary and Premier, he was absolute master of one of the world's two superpowers. During those years he was a vivid, colorful and dangerous figure to the West. Since he was overthrown six years ago, he has lived as a "pensioner" in a modest *dacha* 15 miles southwest of Moscow.

The document excerpted by LIFE, to be published next month in book form by Little, Brown and Company with the title *Khrushchev Remembers*, is written in the first person. It constitutes an insider's view of Soviet leadership over three decades, and it incorporates a denunciation of Stalin's abuses which is all the more convincing since it comes from a loyal Soviet citizen. Khrushchev himself explains why he is finally speaking out: "I tell these stories because, unpleasant as they may be, they contribute to the self-purification of our Party. I speak as a man who stood for many years at Stalin's side. As a witness to those years, I address myself to the generations of the future, in hope that they will avoid the mistakes of the past."

In his introduction to *Khrushchev Remembers*, Edward Crankshaw, the British scholar and foremost Khrushchev biographer, writes, about this document: "To anyone who had listened to him in the days of his prime, or read his speeches in Russian, there was no mistaking the authentic tone. So what we have is an extraor-

inary, a unique historical document. It is the first thing of its kind to come from any Soviet leader of the Stalin and post-Stalin eras. It takes us straight into what has been hitherto a forbidden land of the mind. And for me the supreme interest and value of this narrative lies in the unconscious revelation of the underlying attitude: the assumptions, the ignorances, the distorted views, which must be shared to a greater or lesser degree by all those Soviet leaders who came to maturity under Stalin.

"What Khrushchev does not do, perhaps cannot do, is provide the clue to his own astonishing transformation from one of Stalin's most reliable henchmen into the international figure who, toward the end of his career, was showing signs of wisdom of a really superior kind. The qualities were not suddenly added to him: they must have been latent all the time, when, to all appearances, as a determined Party professional, sycophantic toward his master, bullying toward his subordinates, maneuvering round his rivals with deep peasant cunning, he was visibly distinguished from the others only by a certain liveliness of imagination, a warmth of feeling, a sturdy self-reliance, and at times the recklessness of a born gambler."

What Khrushchev does do—and this adds a whole new dimension to our knowledge—is reveal the morbid world of Joseph Stalin from a new vantage point. Just as important, Khrushchev also reveals his own fascinating personality: the young man who joined the Communist Party at 24 and fought in the Red-White civil war of 1919-20; the dedicated Party worker who at first served Stalin slavishly and enthusiastically, involved himself in the Party infighting which led to the terrible purges of 1936-38; the civilian autocrat of the Ukraine who gradually became aware that his brutish chief in